

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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PLEASE NOTE

National Register of Historic Places (National Register) nominations are considered **drafts** until listed by the Keeper of the National Register (Keeper). Nominations can be changed at the State Historical Resources Commission meeting based on comments received by, but not limited to:

- Local governments;
- Owners;
- State Historic Preservation Officer;
- Office of Historic Preservation Staff;
- State Historical Resources Commission; and
- General public.

National Register nominations may also be changed by the Keeper prior to listing. Nominations needing substantive changes may require recirculation to all interested parties for additional review and comment.

California Register of Historical Resources nominations are considered **drafts** until approved for listing or formally determined eligible for listing by the State Historical Resources Commission. Nominations can be changed at the State Historical Resources Commission meeting based on comments received by, but not limited to:

- Local governments;
- Owners;
- State Historic Preservation Officer;
- Office of Historic Preservation Staff;
- State Historical Resources Commission; and
- General public.

California Points of Historical Interest nominations are considered **drafts** until approved for listing by the State Historical Resources Commission and the Director of California State Parks. Nominations can be changed at the State Historical Resources Commission meeting based on comments received by, but not limited to:

- Local governments;
- Owners;
- State Historic Preservation Officer;
- Office of Historic Preservation Staff;
- State Historical Resources Commission;
- General public.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Dewella Apartments**

other names/site number Dewella Court

2. Location

street & number 234-236 East Wilshire Avenue N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Fullerton N/A ☐ vicinity

state California code CA county Orange code 059 zip code 92832

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

California Office of Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

☐ removed from the National
Register

☐ other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Dewella Apartments
Name of Property

Orange, California
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof barrel clay tile
walls wood-frame

other wrought iron, cast iron, stucco, clay tile, glass, wood, neon tube lighting, metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Noble, Ora Vinton

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☒ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☒ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Orange County Archives; CSU Fullerton Pollak Library; Fullerton, Santa Ana, Long Beach, and Los Angeles Public Libraries; Calif. Dept. of Public Health; Fullerton Development Services Dept.; Chism Family Private Papers

Dewella Apartments
Name of Property

Orange, California
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.11 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	4	—	—	—

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debora Richey (drichey@fullerton.edu)

organization Fullerton Heritage date January 22, 2008

street & number 1233 Luanne Avenue telephone (714) 278-3094 (W); 525-6411 (H)

city or town Fullerton state CA zip code 92831

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Stephen Sulzer

street & number 1325 Frances Avenue telephone (714) 449-1807

city or town Fullerton state CA zip code 92831

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Lushly landscaped and well-designed, the Dewella Apartments were constructed for \$11,000 in the historic central core of Fullerton, California, in 1929. The Spanish Colonial Revival apartment court, one of the oldest apartment buildings in the city, consists of eight five-room units arranged around a central courtyard that features an oval-shaped fountain. Two identical wings, extending north and south, are linked at the rear southern end of the lot by a one-story structure used for utility, storage, and garage space. The use of the two-story structures on the sides and a single-story structure at the rear is an unusual reversal of the bungalow court, the preferred multi-family dwelling in Fullerton prior to World War II. The Dewella Apartments are unique for their graceful combination of building and landscape, which features sweeping staircases, symmetrically designed apartment wings, and formal layout of the garden area in front. The exterior features white stucco walls, red tile roofs, clay tiles, decorative iron work, balconies, and other Spanish style elements. The Spanish Colonial Revival architecture integrates Mission-style turrets and Monterey-style balconies, a combination that is unique to Fullerton. Laid out in a symmetrical pattern, the Dewella's landscape and landscape elements (benches, fountain, pathways) are carefully integrated into the apartment complex's architectural design, enhancing its picturesque Spanish Revival ambience. The apartment court also features the oldest neon sign in Fullerton, only one of two that still remain within the original townsite. The apartments' identical interiors feature gas fireplaces, oak wood floors, built-in china and linen cabinets, coved living room ceilings, and hallway telephone stations. Only minor changes to both the exterior and interior have occurred, and the Dewella retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Overall, the property is in excellent condition.

On September 23, 1998, the Dewella Apartments were designated Local Historic Landmark No. 70 for their "exemplification of the best remaining architectural types in the City of Fullerton" and their "embodiment of elements of outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials, and craftsmanship."¹

Setting/Parking

The Dewella Apartments are situated at 234-236 East Wilshire Avenue. The west bank of apartments is at 234 East Wilshire (units one to four); the east bank at 236 East Wilshire (units five to eight).² The Apartments are located two blocks east of Fullerton's central business core and Harbor (formerly Spadra) Boulevard, the city's major thoroughfare. Like all multi-housing units built in Fullerton before World War II, the Dewella Apartments are situated within the original 430-acre townsite laid out by town founders George Henry (1855-1942) and Edward Russell Amerige (1857-1915) in 1887. To take advantage of commercial, transportation, and social amenities, all of the multi-housing units built during this period were within walking distance of the downtown area.

The Dewella Apartments sit between two Spanish Colonial Revival buildings: a single-story residence (1919) at 228 East Wilshire and the First Lutheran Church (1942), a Local Historic Landmark, at 215 North Lemon Avenue. Since the Apartment's construction in 1929, commercial, residential, and institutional buildings, such as a Midcentury modern apartment complex and an assisted living facility, have been added to the immediate area (zoned R-3), but the property is still surrounded by buildings constructed between 1910 and 1940 that are in good to excellent condition. The Dewella sits amongst an impressive collection of historic buildings, a number of which have been designated Local Historic Landmarks or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the First Methodist Episcopal Church (1909) at 117 North Pomona, the Fullerton General Hospital (1913) at 201 East Amerige, the Pomona Bungalow Court (1922) at 314 North Pomona, the Nenno House (1928) at 321 North Pomona, and the WPA Fullerton Library (1941), now the Fullerton

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Museum Center, located at 301 North Pomona. Specific changes to what was the historic setting of the Dewella Apartments in the 1920s have been relatively minor; consequently, the historic character of the housing complex has not been diminished by a loss of integrity to its traditional setting.

A public alley running long the south (rear) side of the Apartments provides tenant access to ten single-car garages and one two-car garage. Each renter is allowed one garage, and one garage is used by the complex's owner. The building was designed so that the automobiles at the rear of the property did not intrude upon the courtyard or open space of the complex. Public parking is also available on East Wilshire and adjacent streets.

Exterior

Situated on a 100- by 140-foot lot, the Spanish Colonial Revival Dewella is a two-story stucco, wood-framed apartment court with a red-tiled compound roof. The Dewella Apartments feature eight, five-room units arranged around a central court that provides a sense of privacy. There is direct access from all eight apartments, whether upper or ground level, to the courtyard and garden space. The Dewella's stucco exterior, plastered in a swirl pattern, is painted white and the trim a dark brown. Two identical 27- by 52-foot wings (2,835 square feet each), extending north and south, are linked at the back, southern end of the lot by a 18- by 100-foot one-story structure (2,080 square feet) used for utility, storage, and garage space. The use of the two-story structures on the sides and a single-story building at the rear is an unusual reversal of the pattern of the bungalow court, the preferred multi-family dwelling in Fullerton prior to World War II. The U-shaped complex, which is in excellent condition, faces the street (north).

The Dewella is unique for its style and graceful combination of building and landscape, which features sweeping staircases, symmetrically disposed apartment wings, and formal layout of the garden area in front. The northern corners of the second stories project and have separate four-sided hipped roofs with low Mission-style turrets topped by wrought iron weathervanes. Curved staircases sweep up from the central court, the focal point of the complex, to second story Monterey-styled balconies with turned wooden balusters. The use of smooth stucco walls with Mission-style forms for the second story at the front and the Monterey-style balconies is also an effective combination and unique to Fullerton. The Dewella's superb use of Spanish Colonial Revival architectural details—railings, gates, locksets for doors, weathervanes, lighting fixtures, decorative grills, etc.—provide a unifying theme for the complex, while also providing a counterpoint to the large areas of stucco.

The apartment court is approached through formal, elegant, and symmetrical red-painted cement walkways, scored to match the building's stucco exterior, which wander throughout the complex, leading to individual front and back wooden doors, then continuing through an arch at the rear of the property that leads to a walkway to tenant garages. Tenants move throughout the complex via the concrete pathways and eight separate staircases. Front entrances to the four lower level units (nos. 1-2 on the west bank, 5-6 on the east) are through two wrought iron gates that lead into two-stepped stairs and a walkway. Access to the four upper story units (nos. 3-4 on the west, 7-8 on the east) is via two curved stairways (21 clay tiled stairs each) with stucco balustrades. Each darkly-stained wooden front entrance door features Spanish hardware, a peephole, and a 10- by 14-inch window, or viewing port, covered by a decorative wrought iron grille. Between each set of double apartments are wrought iron light fixtures. The apartments on the lower levels have wall unit mailboxes below the light fixtures. Wall unit mailboxes for the upper level apartments are inserted in the walls at the base of the curved staircases. Wall niches outside units one and six are used to house container plants. Rear doors for the four apartments on the lower levels are through arched openings on the east and west side of the complex. On the north (front) side of the complex, two sets of staircases (17 clay tiled steps each) with stucco balustrades lead to the rear wooden doors of units four and eight. At the rear of the property, two additional staircases (18 clay tiled stairs each) with

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stucco balustrades lead to the rear doors of units three and seven. Opposite the tenant exit stairs at the rear of the property are two additional staircases (19 steps each) that lead to the roof of the garage, an area originally used to dry clothes, but now unused. The roof top area is enclosed by wrought iron railings, and there are two small storage rooms (60 square feet each) on the east and west sides. The parking structure at the rear houses ten single-car and one two-car garage, along with two other rooms: one used for storage, the other for washing/drying clothes. The washroom features two sinks, two washing machines, and two dryers.

With the exception of eight single-pane wooden stationary windows that light interior service areas on the east and west side of the apartments, all of the windows in the complex are double-hung, metal casement windows of varying sizes. On the south side are four rectangular (four lights each) windows and two square four-light windows. The south side also features two wrought iron decorative grilles on the northeast and northwest corners of the two apartment banks. The north side features four rectangular four-light casement windows, and two smaller square four-light windows. The east and west sides each contain eight small two-light windows, and eight rectangular eight-light windows. The fronts of the units, facing the courtyard, each feature two arched eight-light windows, one rectangular ten-light window, and two eight-light rectangular windows. The units have heating, but no air-conditioning, and the windows are positioned to offset Southern California's hot, dry climate and cool evenings, while also maximizing the amount of natural sunlight.

Exterior Changes

Changes to the exterior of the Dewella Apartments have been minor and do not detract from the historic character of the complex. New washers and dryers have been added to the washroom, and the garages now have electric door openers. One of the original 12 single-car garages has been converted into a two-car garage that also houses the complex's large trash bin. The original wooden garage doors have been replaced with metal ones, as have the two doors that provide access to the two small storage rooms on top of the garage. Some Spanish-styled hardware on the rear unit doors has been replaced by newer locks and doorknobs. Around 2000, restoration work was completed on the stairways to the roof of the garage and rear exit stairways for units four and eight, and new clay tiles were added to the steps. For security reasons, non-compatible modern metal lights were added to the east, west, and south sides, and above the rear entrance to the apartments in 2006.

Landscaping/Signage

Building permits and local news articles indicate that the original owner planned to erect two additional apartment wings along Wilshire Avenue,³ but plans for the matching units were abandoned. When the building plans were cancelled, the lawn and garden area was expanded, creating a striking setback from the street. This dramatic setback from Wilshire Avenue adds to the welcoming nature of the courtyard and its romantic Spanish Revival ambience while making the apartment complex one of the most recognizable buildings in Fullerton.

When the Apartments opened in December of 1929, the fountain and cement walkways were in place, but landscaping and signage were not added until the Spring of 1930. The grounds of the Dewella are subdivided into two areas laid out in a symmetrical pattern of matching lawn space, flowering bushes, and trees. Narrow cement walkways define parterres lined by ankle- and hip-high boxwood hedges. The ornamental garden area and flower beds are filled with roses, babies'-breath, camellias, and bird-of-paradise plants. Potted plants are also positioned throughout the complex.

At the front of the intersecting pathways is a circular-shaped lawn/plant area centered on a black metal, nine-foot tall gas street light. Two matching black cast iron benches are situated on either side of the circle. In the middle of the intersecting paths, and in front of the apartment front entrances, is a six- by ten-foot oval pond surrounded by wrought iron

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fencing. The fountain was in place in 1929, but the wrought iron railing surrounding it was added in 1930. Fountain water spurts from the mouth of a fish. Lawn area sweeps from the street up to the sides of the Apartments and manicured shrubs which surround the complex's two wings. Rows of cypress trees, bird-of-paradise, and hydrangeas are used to define the property line on the east and west sides of the grounds. Two palm trees are situated on either side of the walkway leading to the utility rooms and garages. Two palm trees are also located adjacent to each of the north staircases. The fountain, courtyard, and gardens provide both a private oasis for the tenants and a place for public activity.

Just behind the fountain is a twelve-foot tall neon sign, with a blue background and red letters, which spells out Dewella. Added a few months after the Apartments opening in 1929, the Dewella neon sign is now the oldest extant neon sign in Fullerton, and only one of two original neon signs that used to dot the downtown area.⁴ Restoration work was completed on the sign in 2006.

Landscaping/Signage Changes

The tall wrought iron light near the entrance when the Dewella Apartments opened in 1929 was removed sometime in the 1950s and not replaced. The complex's landscaping has always featured the symmetrical lawn space coupled with flowering bushes and palm trees, but the property has been re-landscaped over the years. In 1997, local landscaper David Gardner was hired to re-landscape the lawn and garden space. The circular manicured shrub was replaced by a grass and hedges, a rose garden was added, and the plants adjacent to the two quadraplexes were replaced by flowering bushes.⁵

Interior

Each of the eight 702-square foot apartment units has the same simple and efficient layout designed to take advantage of the courtyard area. The living spaces—the dining and living rooms—are oriented toward the courtyard, while services—the kitchens and bathrooms—line the rear and sides of the complex. The front entrance of each unit leads directly into the living room, which flows into a formal dining area on the north. A wooden swing door in the dining room leads into the kitchen, then a small service area which houses a refrigerator, water heater, and the rear exit door. A small hallway off the living room leads into a single bedroom with a closet and a small bathroom, which contains a small wall-mounted sink and bathtub. Each of the matching units contains fine detailing and extra features, including oak wood floors, a gas fireplace, a built-in china cabinet in the dining room and a built-in linen closet in the hallway, an arched opening into the bathtub/shower, a coved ceiling in the living room, a living room closet with a glass panel front, and a hallway telephone station. The living room gas fireplace provides a focal point without consuming appreciable wall space. The wood china and linen built-ins are stained a dark brown to match the wooden entrance door and building trim. The kitchen cabinets and black and white ceramic counter top tiles are original. Entrances into the dining room and hallway feature decorative ogee-shaped plasterwork. The apartment walls are painted white.

Interior Alterations

Changes to the interior of the Dewella Apartments have been minor and do not detract from the historic character of the complex. The gas heaters in the fireplaces have been removed and some of the original light fixtures have been replaced by more modern lights or ceiling fans. The original General Electric Company stoves and refrigerators have been replaced by newer appliances. The original mahogany furniture was sold off about thirty years ago, and the apartments are now rented unfurnished, \$1100 to \$1250 a month.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Dewella Apartments are significant to the architectural history of the City of Fullerton under Criterion C of the National Register criteria on the basis of their unusually fine architecture and their association with the architectural development patterns of the community. The Dewella Apartments represent the only example of an apartment court or garden court apartment in the City of Fullerton. Innovative for its time, the Dewella differed dramatically from the few nondescript, two-story boxlike apartment buildings built in the town prior to World War II. Constructed after the last bungalow court went up in town, the Dewella's courtyard design was a larger extension of the bungalow court, the preferred form of multi-family housing in Fullerton. Spread across four lots instead of the typical single lot, the Dewella took the standard bungalow court with its small central garden, enlarged it, and then added two-story buildings with their own stairs, balconies, and other special architectural features. Set back in a landscaped garden, the Dewella offered a new, fresh form of apartment living in the city's central core. The Dewella Apartments also represent the only time that the Spanish Colonial Revival style was applied to an apartment building. In the apartment complex, the Spanish Colonial Revival style is used in an exceptionally graceful fashion. The combination of the Spanish Colonial Revival with touches of the Mission Revival and Monterey styles is unique to Fullerton, as is the neon Dewella sign. The structure is a monument to local development, as one of the early apartment complexes in Fullerton, but also as remarkable architectural creation, unique for its style and combination of building and landscape.

Historical Background

The Dewella Apartments were constructed in 1929 by Herman Henry (1874-1966) and Edna H. Bruns (1888-1975) of Anaheim (1420 S. Los Angeles, razed). Herman Bruns, an engineer with the Southern Pacific Railroad, had moved out to Orange County from the Midwest around 1910. While Mr. and Mrs. Bruns lived in Anaheim, they had relatives, including Mrs. Bruns's father, living in Fullerton. The couple built the Dewella Apartments as a business investment. From 1910 to 1940, Fullerton had a serious "housing accommodation" problem and a "high demand for good rental property," and the city was seen as an ideal location for attracting renters.⁶ When completed, the Dewella Apartments cost Mr. and Mrs. Bruns \$35,000: \$11,000 for the complex and \$24,000 for four lots. Mrs. Bruns spent an additional \$1400 on furniture and other furnishings purchased from the Clausen Furniture Company in Santa Ana.⁷ All the units had matching furniture and rugs.

The Apartments were named for Dewella Bruns Seaburg (1898-1921), the daughter of Herman Bruns and his first wife Edna Emma Quelle Bruns (1878-1942). Dewella Seaburg had passed away during childbirth eight years before the Apartments were built.⁸ Because the apartment complex was to be named for Dewella Seaburg, the Bruns Family wanted the property to be special. To ensure that his daughter's name would remain on the Dewella, Herman Bruns placed a deed restriction on the Apartments that required the neon sign to always remain on the property.⁹

While Mr. Bruns provided construction funds for the Dewella Apartments, the project really belonged to Mrs. Bruns. She selected and worked with the building's designer/contractor Ora Vinton Noble, contacted the local press, decorated each of the units, and even sewed the draperies that hung in the windows of each apartment. The Dewella opened for public viewing and inspection on Sunday December 15, 1929, from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m., and the furnished eight five-room units were completely rented out in twenty-four hours. The *Fullerton News Tribune* featured the Apartments in a full-page spread and called the Dewella "one of the most artistic apartment houses in Orange County, yes, in Southern California." The Apartments were described as having all modern conveniences, including "General Electric refrigerators, electric stoves, electric and gas heat, built-in cabinets and service porches."¹⁰ The furnished apartments were advertised as

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excellent accommodations for families with small children, not singles, but soon became a popular place for young married couples.¹¹ Mrs. Bruns had made plans to erect two more identical units north along Wilshire Avenue, making the apartment complex the largest in Fullerton, but the Dewella unfortunately opened almost two months after Black Thursday, October 24, 1929, the day of the stock market crash, and construction of the additional wings was abandoned. The Bruns family held on to the Dewella Apartments until July 8, 1947, when they were sold to Mabel (1890-1982) and John Neuschafer (1889-1968), who resided in Apartment #1.¹² Stable ownership (the Dewella has had only four owners) and low tenant turnover have contributed to the complex's excellent condition.

The Dewella Apartments were designed and built by general contractor Ora Vinton Noble (1882-1942), who, in turn, subcontracted out some of the work to local contractors.¹³ Noble was born in Albia, Iowa, on May 4, 1882, but moved to Santa Ana with family members around 1900. Throughout his lifetime, Noble held a number of jobs, but always fell back on his carpentry skills when the economy was bad. He was an automobile aficionado who would travel great distances to complete building projects at a time when roads were underdeveloped in the United States. He moved frequently, moving in and out of California, always using his residence as his business office. In 1908, Noble moved to Los Angeles (392 Budlong Ave.) where he advertised himself as a carpenter, but by 1913, he had advanced to general contractor, making enough money to construct a seven-room Craftsman bungalow for himself at 1139 West 39th Place.¹⁴ Around 1914, Noble married Agnes Augusta McNeal (1884-1960), a member of the wealthy pioneer McNeal and Ross families, in Los Angeles. (Agnes McNeal's grandfather was Jacob R. Ross, Sr. (1813-1870), the original owner of the property on which the City Santa Ana now stands).¹⁵ The couple moved back to Santa Ana and on June 20, 1914, Noble announced in the *Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer* that he had established himself as a contractor and builder at 1004 Baker Street, the home of his mother-in-law, Christiana McNeal (1853-1932).¹⁶ In December 1916, Noble and his wife drove their six-cylinder Overland Light Six touring car 1,750 miles to Fort Worth, Texas, where he constructed a residence and later headed the service/used car department of the Overland Automobile Company headquarters in Dallas.¹⁷ The couple returned to Los Angeles in September 1917, settling in Long Beach (1157 Walnut) where Noble worked as a shipwright for the Los Angeles Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company (later Todd Shipyards) in San Pedro during World War I.¹⁸ After the War, the Nobles moved back to Santa Ana (312 E. 3rd St., 1019 Van Ness, 1615 W. 1st St.) where Noble constructed a Young Women's Christian Association hut at Santa Ana High School in 1921 for \$7337.¹⁹ By the time of the Dewella Apartments' construction, Noble was back living in Long Beach (1145 Cherry Ave.), advertising himself as a "Contractor—Designer—Builder specializing in apartment house construction."²⁰ After completing the Dewella Apartments in 1929, Noble worked on a project in Santa Barbara, moved out of California, but returned in the mid-1930s to Los Angeles (2232 S. Catalina, 1712 Reynier Ave.) where he remained until his death. At the time of his death due to heart failure on October 30, 1942, Noble was a cabinet maker. Ora and Agnes Noble, who had no children, are buried in the Ross Family section of the Santa Ana Cemetery (1919 E. Santa Clara), the cemetery founded by Jacob R. Ross, Sr. in 1870.²¹

The Dewella Apartments are featured in David Gebhard's and Robert Winter's *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California, Fullerton Through the Years: A Survey of Architectural, Cultural and Environmental Heritage*, and *Community Treasures: Fullerton's Heritage*.

Local Architectural Development Context

Between 1910 and 1930, the population of Fullerton doubled each decade, increasing from 1,725 to 10,860. Oil had been discovered in the 1890s, and the town's agricultural industry was booming, with Fullerton packing houses shipping as much as \$15 million in citrus crops in banner years. This increase in population created an intense demand for housing. To meet this need, residents and developers looked almost exclusively to single-family housing. The early subdivision of the town by Edward and George Amerige, land investors and real estate agents, favored single-family dwellings over

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multi-family units. Unlike nearby cities, such as Anaheim and Santa Ana, which had dozens of apartments, Fullerton only had a handful of apartment buildings constructed prior to World War II. Apartment houses were viewed as a poor place to raise children, and the “indecent propinquities” of apartment life did not appeal to conservative Fullerton residents, most of whom were transplants from the South, East, and Midwest, looking for a new and better life in California.²² Because of the stigma attached to apartment life, the Dewella and other Fullerton apartments were advertised as “apartment homes” with homelike qualities.²³ The first apartments, the Marwood Apartments (400 N. Spadra, razed) were built in 1913, twenty-six years after Fullerton was laid out in 1887,²⁴ and it wasn’t until 1924 that another apartment building, the Grieves Apartments (529-531 E. Commonwealth), was constructed. From 1925 to 1933, only a few more were built, with the Depression and World War II eventually halting any construction of multi-housing units. The only multi-family housing that opened were large Victorian-era dwellings, such as the Dun Romin Apartments (520 W. Amerige), that were converted into apartments. After World War II, Fullerton’s early apartments were replaced by larger apartment complexes, mostly built outside the city’s original townsite, which made more efficient and profitable use of land. Over the years, the few apartment buildings that were constructed in Fullerton from 1913 to 1933 were razed, and the Dewella Apartments are only one of a few apartment buildings still remaining from the pre-World War II era.²⁵

What Fullerton residents and developers overwhelmingly preferred for multi-family housing were bungalow courts. The first bungalow court was constructed in Pasadena in 1909, and this new and innovative form of urban housing quickly caught on in Southern California, remaining a popular alternative to the single family home until World War II. A blending of the apartment building and the single family bungalow, bungalow courts offered residents—especially single women, retirees, and returning service men—who could not afford a house or did not want to be bothered with upkeep an independent lifestyle while also providing security and a sense of community.²⁶ Unlike apartments, there was no social or economic stigma attached to living in a bungalow court, which represented stability and maintained a semblance of suburban gentility. The courts could easily be constructed on a typical single lot and were situated among single-family homes in upper, middle, and even low-income neighborhoods. Although the architectural styles varied over time, bungalow courts in Southern California usually featured a group of six to ten small, individual houses placed around a communal garden.

Fullerton developers began building bungalow courts in the 1920s, eventually constructing more in Fullerton than any other city in Orange County. Fullerton now has five—San Souci Court, Pomona Bungalow Court, Truslow Court, Rose Court, and the Mariola Apartments—of the eight extant bungalow courts remaining in Orange County²⁷ Truslow Court was constructed specifically to house poorer railroad workers living next to the tracks. The bungalow courts in Fullerton, which provided six to ten rental units, were laid-out in a U-shape, with a two-story unit at the end of the court serving as a visual focus.

The Dewella Apartments, constructed just after the last bungalow court was built in Fullerton, represented a new type of family multi-housing in the city: the apartment court or garden court apartment. The Dewella is the only example of an apartment court constructed in the City of Fullerton. A larger scale descendant of the bungalow court, the Dewella’s apartment court design took the typical bungalow court with its small central garden, enlarged it, and then added two-story buildings with their own stairs, balconies, and other special architectural features while maintaining the overall design. It reversed the typical pattern of Fullerton’s bungalow courts by the use of a two-story structure at the sides and a single-story structure at the rear. Although the planned additional wings were never constructed, the Dewella Apartments were an ambitious project for the time. Spread across four lots instead of the typical single-family lot, the Dewella was intended to provide sixteen rental units instead of the six to ten offered by bungalow courts or apartment buildings, taking advantage of the huge housing shortage in the city. It was a fresh, new building type that offered an attractive housing choice to middle-class residents.

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Architectural Style Context

When the first settlers arrived in Fullerton in the 1880s, they brought with them a preference for traditional architectural styles that reminded them of home. Residential and commercial buildings relied almost exclusively on architectural styles, such as Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Beaux Arts, imported from other regions. In 1919, prominent architect Carleton Winslow, Sr. (1876-1946) was asked by the Fullerton school board to design a new high school. Four years earlier, Winslow had been appointed Architect-in-Residence for the Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego, where he designed many of the temporary buildings and supervised the construction of permanent buildings designed by Bertram Goodhue (1869-1924), including the California State Building and the Fine Arts Building. Winslow chose the Spanish Colonial Revival style, an innovation which brought him widespread recognition and ignited a love for Spanish Revival that continues in California today.²⁸ While in Fullerton, Winslow gave a series of talks with color slides on the Spanish style of architecture and recommended that Fullerton adopt the Spanish Colonial Revival type of architecture for buildings in the city. In July 1919, the Board of Trade (later the Chamber of Commerce), which included all influential organizations in the city, passed a resolution declaring Spanish Colonial Revival the "uniform style" of architecture "for all public buildings that may be constructed, and also for any of the buildings that might be remodeled."²⁹ This unofficial but applied policy led to a dramatic increase in the number of Spanish Colonial Revival buildings in Fullerton. The style proved to be very adaptable and was used in Fullerton in a remarkable number of building types, both residential and nonresidential, from 1920 to 1944.

Despite the overwhelming preference for Spanish Colonial Revival buildings in Fullerton, the style was used only once for an apartment building—the Dewella Apartments. Nearly all of the apartments constructed in the city were bland, nondescript two-story boxes, such as the Bischoff Apartments, the Clarke Apartments, and the Dunphy Apartments, which had central front entrances with four or five plain units on each floor. The Dewella Apartments' picturesque Spanish Colonial ambience, with its tile roofs, fragrant gardens, fountain, expansive white walls, and beautiful interiors, made it strikingly different from any other apartment building constructed in Fullerton. The Apartments' architecture was very innovative at the time, and local advertising noted the complex's "charming Spanish architecture combined with modern Spanish ideas."³⁰ The Dewella was and still remains one of the most beautiful apartment buildings in the city. The combination of the Spanish Colonial Revival with the use of Mission Revival and Monterey style elements is unique to Fullerton, as is the neon Dewella sign. The structure is not only a monument in local development as one of the early apartment buildings in Fullerton, but it is also a remarkable architectural creation, unique for its graceful style and exceptional combination of building and landscape.

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¹"Fullerton Development Services Staff Report, Historical Landmark HL-49 through Historical Landmark HL-77." September 23, 1998; "Fullerton Landmark Commission Resolution Nos. 49-77." September 23, 1998. Both the staff report and resolution are on file in the Fullerton Development Services Department, Fullerton City Hall.

²In anticipation of the construction of two additional apartment wings at a later date, the Dewella Apartments were originally situated at 232-238 East Wilshire.

³Building Permit, September 11, 1929. On file in the Fullerton Development Services Dept.; "Permits Taken for Two Units to Start Soon; Mrs. Herman Bruns Plans 16 Family Group on E. Wilshire Ave." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* September 12, 1929, p. 1.

⁴The other neon sign is located in front of Fullerton's first City Hall (237 W. Commonwealth Avenue), constructed in 1942. The neon sign spells out "Police" to identify the Police Station, then a part of City Hall.

⁵Dave Gardner (Dave Gardner, the Gardener, Fullerton, 714-992-1949) also maintains the Dewella's landscaping.

⁶"New Apartment to Be Opened for Inspection." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* December 14, 1929, p. 4.

⁷*Orange County Tax Assessment Records, 1930*. Orange County Archives, Santa Ana, California. In 1930, Mrs. Bruns was listed as the sole owner of the Dewella Apartments, but when the complex was sold in 1947, Herman Bruns was listed as the only owner; "Dewella Apartments [Advertisement]." Clausen Furniture Company. *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* December 14, 1929, p. 5.

⁸Dewella A. Bruns Seaburg was born and passed away in Ottumwa, Iowa, the hometown of her maternal grandparents, Willilam F. Quelle and Rachel N. Quelle, immigrants from Germany. Dewella is a common German/Austrian first name for girls. Dewella Seaburg's son, Earl Seaburg, Jr., did live and was raised by his paternal grandparents. Photographs of Dewella Seaburg are on file in the Launer Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library.

⁹Chism, Dewella. Email November 2, 2007.

¹⁰"New Apartments to Be Opened for Inspection." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* December 14, 1929, p. 4.

¹¹Bowen, Warren. Email October 19, 2007. Mr. Bowen is a local historian and lifelong resident of Fullerton (412 Cannon Lane, Fullerton 92831).

¹²*Orange County Tax Assessment Records, 1947*. Orange County Archives, Santa Ana, California.

¹³Painting and decorating was done by Jack Riley & Sons (541 W. Commonwealth), hardware was provided by the Fullerton Hardware Company (215 N. Spadra), electric fixtures came from the Bungalow Electric Shop (601 S. Los Angeles St., Anaheim), plumbing was completed by J. D. Sanborn (Santa Ana), and electrical work was done by Coast Electrical Company (Long Beach). "Home Owners—Real Estate—Builders Page." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* December 14, 1929, p. 5; Building Permit, September 11, 1929. On file in the Fullerton Development Services Dept.

¹⁴"Building Permits." *Los Angeles Times* January 28, 1912, p. VI3.

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¹⁵Armor, Samuel, Ed. "Samuel T. McNeal." *History of Orange County California with Biographical Sketches*. Los Angeles: Historic Record Co., 1911, p. 471-472; "Samuel Ross." *History of Orange County California with Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been Identified with Its Growth and Development from the Early Days to the Present*. Los Angeles: Historic Record Co., 1921, p. 706. Photographs of Agnes Noble are on file in the Santa Ana Public Library.

¹⁶*Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer* June 20, 1914, p. 1; Ross, Raymond R., Jr. *Family Life in Early Orange County*. Oral History 2399. Raymond R. Ross Interviewed by Barbara Oldewage on August 10, 1995. On file in the Santa Ana Public Library. Christiana McNeal inherited the entire Ross Family fortune upon the death of her mother Elizabeth Thompson Ross (1815-1895).

¹⁷"Los Angeles Contractor Drives to Fort Worth in 13 Days in New Overland Six; To Make Home in City." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* January 21, 1917, p. 8; "Heard Along Automobile Row." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* September 9, 1917, p. 9; "Starts to California in Overland That's Made 20,000 Miles." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* September 16, 1917, p. 24.

¹⁸"Ora Vinton Noble." *World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*.

¹⁹*Southwest Builder and Contractor*, November 11, 1921, p. 23.

²⁰O. V. Noble [Advertisement]. *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* December 14, 1929, p. 5.

²¹"Ora Vinton Noble." Certificate of Death, October 31, 1942. On file with the California Dept. of Public Health, Sacramento; "Agnes Noble [Obituary]." *Santa Ana Register* May 6, 1960, p. A19.

²²Wright, Gwendolyn. *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981, p. 148-151.

²³"Dewella Apartments [Advertisement]." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* December 14, 1929, p. 5.

²⁴"New Apartment House; Inspector Schumacher Says It's Really Going Up." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* February 16, 1913, p. 4; "Marwood Apartments Open." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* July 11, 1913, p. 1.

²⁵Extant apartment buildings from this era are the Santa Fe/Pueblo Grieves Apartments (1924, 525-531 E. Commonwealth), the heavily remodeled Bischoff Apartments (1926, 521 N. Pomona), the brick residential Dunphy Apartments (1926, 126 W. Whiting), and the Virginia Apartments (1931, 326-328 N. Balcom), a hodge-podge of separate Mission Revival/Pueblo units. The last apartment building to be constructed was the Santa Fe/Pueblo Tennant Apartments (210 W. Truslow) in 1933, constructed by James H. Tennant (1881-1935). Because of the Depression, Tennant acted as his own contractor, constructing much of the building himself.

²⁶Curtis, James R. and Larry Ford. "Bungalow Courts in San Diego: Monitoring a Sense of Place." *Journal of San Diego History* vol. 34, no. 2 (Spring 1988). <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/88spring/bungalow.htm>.

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²⁷Fullerton's five extant bungalow courts, all constructed in the 1920s, are: San Souci Court (501 W. Whiting), Mariola Apartments (520 E. Commonwealth), Pomona Bungalow Court (314 N. Pomona), Rose Court (125 Ellis Place), and Truslow Court (424 E. Truslow). Identified bungalow courts outside Fullerton are located at 615 N. Clementine, Anaheim; 233 Orange, Orange; and 323-327 6th Street, Huntington Beach. Letter dated April 16, 2007, Richard H. Dodd, 210 Shipyard Way, Newport Beach, CA. Dodd, an architect and architectural historian, has made a survey of bungalow courts in Orange County.

²⁸"Carleton Winslow, Sr." San Diego Biographies. San Diego Historical Society. <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/bio/winslow/winslow.htm>; Winslow, Carleton Monroe. *The Architecture and Gardens of the San Diego Exposition; A Pictorial Survey of the Aesthetic Features of the Panama California International Exposition Described by Carleton Monroe Winslow Together with an Essay by Clarence S. Stine, Illustrated from Photographs by Harold A. Taylor, with an Introduction by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue*. San Francisco: P. Elder, 1916.

²⁹"Fullerton to Advance; Spanish Colonial Uniform Style of Architecture Accepted." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* July 19, 1919, p. 1. Also: Marsden, Raleigh A. "Choosing an Architecture for a Town." *California Southland* December 1919-January 1920, p. 7-8; "Vision Comes to Fullerton." *Los Angeles Times* July 17, 1919, p. II8; "Uniform Style Architecture is Planned; Fullerton Bodies Discuss Project of Uniform Public Building." *Santa Ana Register* July 17, 1919, p. 17.

³⁰"Dewella Apartment [Advertisement]." *Fullerton Daily News Tribune* December 14, 1929, p. 5.

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Additional References (Continued):

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Ziebell, Bob. *Fullerton: A Pictorial History*. Rev. ed. Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company, 2002.

Dewella Apartments

Name of Property

Orange, California

County and State

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Fullerton City Lot 5 Block 15 and Lot 6 Block 15, Track 276 (Map Reference 6-C5/738-H7)

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Dewella Apartments. When the Apartments opened in 1929, the property was Lots Five, Six, Seven and Eight in Block Fifteen of the Townsite of Fullerton, as shown on a map recorded in Book 22, Page 3, Miscellaneous Records of Los Angeles, California.

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Black and White Photographs:

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
December 15, 1929 (Opening/Inspection Day)
Private family papers of Dewella Chism, Marana, Arizona
Copy on file, Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, north (front) elevation
1 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
1967
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, north (front) elevation
2 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
1967
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, north (front) elevation, facing southwest
3 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
1968
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, north (front) elevation
4 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Jack E. Hancock (*Fullerton News Tribune*, March 22, 2001, p. 1)
March 22, 2001
Copy on file, Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, north (front) elevation
5 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, north (front) elevation
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Black and White Photographs (Continued):

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
East wing, facing southeast
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Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, north (front) elevation
8 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, west wing, facing courtyard
9 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Entrance doors, west wing
10 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, east elevation
11 of 19

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Black and White Photographs (Continued):

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, west elevation
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Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Exterior, south (rear) elevation
13 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Interior, Living/Dining Rooms
14 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Interior, Dining Room/Hallway
15 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Interior, Fireplace, Living Room
16 of 19

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Black and White Photographs (Continued):

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Interior, Bedroom Looking toward Hallway
17 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Interior, Hallway
18 of 19

Dewella Apartments
234-236 East Wilshire Avenue
Fullerton, California 92832
Orange County
Kathryn Morris (Fullerton Heritage)
November 2007
Launer Room, Fullerton Public Library
Interior, Kitchen
19 of 19